

## Exhibit 15

## DISCLOSURE OF TAX SCANDAL

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## MONEY

# Former Minister of Taxation : Ultimately, scandals are the responsibility of politicians

However, Karsten Lauritzen (V) does not regret his handling of the dividend scandal.



The Commission on Tax will hold a hearing of former Minister of Taxation Karsten Lauritzen at the Court in Frederiksberg, Tuesday 8 December 2020. (Photo: Claus Bech / Scanpix 2020) (Photo: Claus bech © Scanpix)

BY JAKOB USSING

DEC 8, 2020 NOTE: THE ARTICLE IS MORE THAN 30 DAYS OLD

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For more than a year and a half, the Tax Commission has been digging into who is responsible for foreign financiers being able to drain the Danish treasury of DKK 12.7 billion in suspected fraud with dividend tax.

While Benny Engelbrecht (S) has said that he believes that the bureaucracy has failed <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/tidligere-skatteminister-om-udbytteskandalen-embedsvaerket-har-svigtet> both him and the other tax ministers by never bringing the issues to the ministers' table, Engelbrecht's successor, Karsten Lauritzen (V), places a large part of the responsibility on the politicians themselves.

As the last of a total of nine tax ministers, he has now been questioned by the Tax Commission, and tomorrow the commission has the last two hearings of officials.

- The responsibility for the fact that Skat did not function as an administration is a political responsibility of changing governments. And that was one of the reasons why the government, while I was minister, spent a double-digit billion on building up tax . I do not think it is fair to say that it is the fault or responsibility of some specific employee, says Karsten Lauritzen to DR after the interrogation.

In hour-long interrogations, the Tax Commission has been critical of the highest official in the Ministry of Taxation, head of department Jens Brøchner <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/haarde-konfrontationer-i-skattekommissionen-departementschef-afviser-ansvar-i>, but Karsten Lauritzen will not judge him.

- There are certainly lots of things that I could have done differently, he could have done differently, some of the red tax ministers or the former department head could have done differently <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/tidligere-skatte-topchef-jeg-har-et-medansvar-men-det-er-der-flere-der-har>, but it is not my job to pass judgment. That is the task of the Commission .

### **Very expensive summer**

Karsten Lauritzen is critical of the fact that the then Tax received reports of possible fraud from a Danish lawyer in mid-June 2015, but it was not until 6

August 2015 that the box office slammed in, and only on 24 August did he be informed as Minister.

In the seven weeks leading up to 6 August 2015, as much as DKK 2.6 billion flowed out of the state coffers to the suspected fraudsters <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/ferieramt-skat-tager-let-paa-klokkeklare-tip-koster-26-milliarder-i-udbytteskat>.

## BILLION FRAUD AGAINST THE DANISH STATE

Den formodede svindel for 12,7 milliarder kroner er startet i

But unlike Benny Engelbrecht, Karsten Lauritzen does not feel let down by the civil service.

- With what we know today, you could have stopped some of the scams earlier, if you had approached these reviews differently. And it is strongly criticizable. I'm sorry on behalf of the staff and the old Skat . In light of the fact that one of the people who sat with it is now serving a prison sentence <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/tioeren-faldt-aldrig-skat-gennemskuede-ikke-sven-nielsens-udbyttefusk> and how few resources were available, my criticism does not go to the ordinary staff. But I think it is quite reasonable that some managerial consequences have been taken.

## Stands on target for decisions

In particular, repatriations of a number of managers in the wake of Skat discovering the suspected fraud have aroused strong feelings in the Tax Commission, where several of the repatriates have strongly criticized the process.

One of the repatriates has attacked Karsten Lauritzen for meddling politically in the repatriations <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/tidligere-chef-i-skat-beskylder-karsten-lauritzen-politisk-indblanding-i-hjemsendelser>, but Karsten Lauritzen categorically denied having done so to the Tax Commission.

# The secret shareholders

And he believes today that it was right that Skat's then director, Jesper Rønnow Simonsen, chose to send the managers home.

- I mean that, yes.

*But they have been acquitted?*

- They have been acquitted in order to assert a liability under service law. But they have not been acquitted of making mistakes, and they have not been acquitted at all of whether they have solved this task satisfactorily.

- I think that they themselves could well have thought of having done some things differently with the knowledge we have today. They have had very difficult conditions for their work, but there are also some who should have resigned at a much earlier time.

The lawyer for one of the chiefs sent home drilled into the commission as to why Karsten Lauritzen thought that Jesper Rønnow Simonsen could make that decision, and whether or not Jesper Rønnow Simonsen himself should have been sent home.

But Karsten Lauritzen insists that it was right to let Rønnow Simonsen continue for a year before he was fired.

- It was the decision I made at the time, and I stand by it.

*Why was it the right decision?*

- There should be someone to clean up in the future, and there should be someone to ensure that Skat could continue to drive. Some of the top management had gone themselves, others had been fired or fired earlier, some were repatriated. So there had been no one left.

- That is the dilemma you are in as a minister. On the one hand, there must be some consequences. On the other hand, it needs to move on. So I chose to take some beatings in public . I think it was best to start the clean-up in the tax administration.

*But you made the decision to say goodbye to him the following year?*

- Yes. And I do not regret it either.



## What are the Bagmandspolitiet doing?

Karsten Lauritzen resigned as Minister of Taxation in connection with the change of government in June 2019 after four years in the post, and he is deeply surprised that the Bagmandspolitiet, after more than five years of work on the case, is still not finished with the investigation .

- I am personally sorry that the Bagmandspolitiet's investigation is progressing so slowly that five and a half years later we have not progressed in getting those responsible to stand before a judge - that no one has been arrested and a lawsuit pending. I do not understand. It's a very long time, and I hope that you will soon be ready to prosecute them.

The main suspect in the case, Sanjay Shah, has also recently complained that he cannot get clarification on whether he will be charged or not <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/bagmand-bag-formodet-milliardsvindel-jeg-er-klar-til-retssag-i-danmark>.

Tomorrow, the Tax Commission has the last two interrogations of civil servants, and thus the Tax Commission has conducted more than 100 interrogations about the dividend case.

The Tax Commission must then decide whether it will come to conclusions on the dividend case - a so-called partial report - or whether it will wait until the other scandals in the tax administration have been investigated in a few years.

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